(d) whether 50 member team of Indian Army officials has also visited small Chinese town to attend China's National Day; and

(e) if so, to what extent both armed forces are together to help each other in permitting defence ties and also defence needs to both countries?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) The initiatives taken by India for strengthening defence ties with China include stepping up exchanges of military delegations, high level visits, training exchanges and invitation to participate as observers in each other's military exercises. The efforts are focused on building of trust and confidence between the two countries particularly in the military sphere, improving military to military relations and ensuring peace and tranquility on the borders.

The visit of General Liang Guanglie, Chinese Chief of General Staff to India in May, 2005 provided an opportunity to exchange views, increase familiarity with the Chinese People's Liberation Army leadership, and step up activities to promote confidence building and relations between the two Armed Forces.

Some of the measures agreed upon to promote defence cooperation between India and China include more frequent reciprocal high-level visits, an annual programme of exchange of professional and training delegations, increased points and frequency of border meetings, participation in each other's national days, festive occasions and sporting events between units, at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and participation as observers in each other's military exercise amongst others.

Recent high-level visits have included the visits of Chief of Army Staff and Vice Chief of Naval Staff from India and the Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to India. Visits of Indian tri-services delegations to China and Chinese delegations to India to each other's defence establishments and training institutions have recently been undertaken to promote mutual trust and confidence between the armed forces of the two countries.

Weapons from Israel

1790. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Israeli 5.56 Model Tava Assault Rifles are being acquired for the Indian Army Special Forces as part of $ 15 million deal for close encounter weapons;

(b) if so, the likely time involved in their acquisition and use by these Forces; and

(c) whether these weapons will be utilized in countering terrorism in the country?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) A contract for procurement of 5.56 mm Assault Rifles along with certain accessories was signed by Ministry of Defence with an Israeli company at a total cost of US$ 18,074,634.

(b) The supplies of the contracted item have been delayed by the Israeli company due to certain circumstances affecting the sourcing of an item as provided for in the contract and related issues. The matter has been taken up with the vendor to resolve the same.

(c) Such weapons can be utilized for operational reasons as deemed fit by the Army.

Shortage of Men, Materials and Vessels in the Coast Guard

1791. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a significant shortage of men, materials and vessels in the Coast Guard, in India;

(b) if so, whether Government would assure of providing enough men, material and vessels expeditiously to coast guard to face increased challenges to internal security posed by the increasing use of sea-lanes for terrorists movements, gun-running and narcotics smuggling;

(c) whether Government would implement measures in introducing any advanced technology including modern surveillance system to make the Coast Guard function effectively and efficiently;

(d) if so, details of measures proposed to be taken; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?